



DRAFT

**SUMMARY MARCH 27, 2025
DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL MEETING**

For review and adoption by the Council at the April 24, 2025, meeting.

All meeting materials, presentations, and comment letters are available at
<https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/council-meetings>

MEETING SUMMARY

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Julie Lee called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM on March 27, 2025, at the California Natural Resources Building at 715 P Street, California 95814.

2. ROLL CALL – ESTABLISH A QUORUM (WATER CODE §85210.5)

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established. The following councilmembers were present: Burgis, Damrell, Hueso, Mehranian, Zingale and Lee.

Councilmember Miller joined the meeting in closed session.

Chair Lee recessed the open session for closed session (Item 3).

3. CLOSED SESSION: LITIGATION (WATER CODE §85210.5) (ACTION ITEM)

The Council will meet with legal counsel to discuss pending litigation regarding: 1) the matters of *Takahashi v. Delta Stewardship Council*, *Sacramento County Superior Ct. Nos. 34-2018-00232084 and 34-2020-0028963234-2018-00232084 and 34-2020-00289632* and *County of Sacramento, et al v. Delta Stewardship Council*, *Sacramento Superior Court No. 25 WM000030* (Government Code section 11126(e)(1)); and 2) whether to initiate litigation based on existing facts and circumstances (Government Code section 11126(e)(2)(C)).

4. RECONVENE OPEN SESSION (ESTIMATED START TIME: 10:00 A.M.)

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established. The following councilmembers were present: Burgis, Damrell, Hueso, Mehranian, Miller, Zingale and Lee.

Chair Lee reported there was nothing to report out from closed session.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was no public comment in Sacramento or Eureka.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR (ACTION ITEM)

- a. Adoption of February 27, 2025 Meeting Summary**
- b. Contract with the University of California, Davis to Fund San Francisco Estuary & Watershed Science (SFEWS) Journal Publication (Resolution 2025-03)**
- c. Amendment to Contract with the Regents of the University of California San Diego, California Sea Grant for the 2025 Class of Delta Science Fellows and 2024/2025 Classes of State Policy Fellows (Resolution 2025-04)**

Chair Lee presented the agenda item for adopting the consent calendar.

Chair Lee asked for public comment

There was no public comment in Sacramento or Eureka.

Motion (approve the consent calendar): offered by Councilmember Hueso, seconded by Councilmember Miller.

Vote: 7/0 - The motion was adopted (Burgis: Aye, Damrell: Aye, Hueso: Aye, Mehranian: Aye, Miller: Aye, Zingale: Aye, Lee: Aye)

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3RmH5ja>, minute 00:01:52.

7. CHAIR'S REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Chair Lee highlighted recent tours she attended including a tour of the State-Federal Flood Operations Center located in Sacramento, CA. Councilmember Hueso also attended the tour and shared reflections from the tour. Chair Lee and Councilmember Zingale shared reflections on their tour of Victoria Island hosted by Kjeldsen Sinnock & Neudeck (KSN) Engineering. Chair Lee closed with a report out on recent legislative meet and greets.

Councilmember Burgis shared updates from the recent Sacramento San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Advisory Committee meeting created by the Delta Protection Commission.

a. Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee Meeting Preview (Information Item)

Brandon Chapin, Legislative and Policy Advisor, provided updates on the DPIIC Restoration Subcommittee meeting, highlighted the upcoming Delta Restoration Forum in May, and the upcoming DPIIC meeting on April 3rd which will focus on restoration and cultural resources in the Delta, and Proposition 4 funds.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was no public comment in Sacramento or Eureka.

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3RmH5ja>, minute 00:03:00.

8. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Executive Officer Jessica Pearson highlighted the tour of Victoria Island provided by KSN Engineering and the Delta Independent Science Board's tour of the Suisun Marsh.

Pearson reviewed the new covered action filed by the County of Sacramento on March 20th for the Zacharias Ranch Mitigation Bank (Bank). The proposed site is located in Sacramento County and situated at the downstream edge of the Upper Mokelumne Basin. Pearson provided an overview of comment letters sent out this month, including the February 27th comment letter to the Solano County Planning Services Division regarding the Cache Slough Mitigation Bank Project and a March 4th letter to the Sacramento Area Council of Government (SACOG) regarding its Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) for the Sacramento Region. Pearson also highlighted letters sent to demonstrate appreciation and support for key partners facing uncertain futures and budget challenges, including the Romberg Tiburon Estuary and Ocean Science Center, a research campus affiliated with San Francisco State University, which may face closure, and for California Sea Grant, a program of the national atmospheric and oceanic administration.

Pearson introduced two new California Sea Grant Fellows Hollis Jones and Jonathan Huang and new staff Katrina Sayles who joined the Council as a Legal Assistant.

Pearson also provided an overview of the Outreach Highlights Report and the Active Project List.

Councilmember Miller highlighted the importance of Fellows and shared appreciation for the meeting today to celebrate their work.

b. Legal Update

Chief Counsel Jorge Aguilar introduced Katrina Sayles and provided a background on her experience.

c. Legislative Update

Legislative and Policy Advisor, Brandon Chapin, began with an overview of the following bills: AB 52, AB 274, AB 717, and AB 1146. Chapin reviewed in detail SB 650 which would provide updates to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009, including a statute of limitations and definition of a person.

Councilmember Mehranian, Councilmember Burgis, and Chapin discussed AB 274 regarding abandoned and derelict vessels.

Councilmember Burgis and Chapin discussed the statute of limitations proposed by SB 650.

Motion (Authorize the Executive Officer and Legislative and Policy Advisor, or their designee, to convey a support position on SB 650 on behalf of the Council and to undertake the activities necessary, in consultation with the Chair, to ensure its successful passage through the legislative process.): offered by Councilmember Burgis, seconded by Councilmember Mehranian.

Vote: 7/0 - The motion was adopted (Burgis: Aye, Damrell: Aye, Hueso: Aye, Mehranian: Aye, Miller: Aye, Zingale: Aye, Lee: Aye)

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was no public comment in Sacramento or Eureka.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3RmH5ja>, minute 00:15:21.

9. LEAD SCIENTIST REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Dr. Windham Myers provided an overview of the highlighted article for this month.

Particulate Organic Carbon Scarcity Exacerbates Vulnerability of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Ecosystem

Mathers, M.A., Bergamaschi, B.A. & Hernes, P.J. Particulate Organic Carbon Scarcity Exacerbates Vulnerability of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Ecosystem. Estuaries and Coasts 48, 67 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12237-025-01502-7>

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta has undergone major changes due to human activities, leading to a large decline in particulate organic carbon (POC). POC is a crucial component of aquatic food webs, supporting everything from microbes to fish, yet it remains poorly tracked and understudied. This makes it difficult to assess how much is available to help sustain the Delta ecosystem. In the journal article, *Particulate Organic Carbon Scarcity Exacerbates Vulnerability of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Ecosystem* (Mathers et al., 2025), the authors address this

knowledge gap by quantifying POC levels, identifying key sources and losses, and evaluating how changes in hydrology affect carbon cycling in the Delta. As the Delta faces ongoing environmental stressors, declining sediment supplies, worsening droughts, and species loss, restoration is becoming increasingly urgent. Wetlands naturally process and store carbon, retain POC through slowed water movement, and prevent rapid loss of POC through tidal flushing. Currently, POC concentrations and transport are not systematically tracked in restored wetland areas as extensively as dissolved organic carbon (DOC). This lack of monitoring makes it difficult to assess how restoration efforts impact POC retention and its role in the carbon cycle. This study reinforces the need for targeted monitoring and science-based restoration efforts to ensure wetlands contribute to long-term Delta resilience.

Chair Lee and Dr. Windham-Myers discussed the article. Dr. Windham-Myers next highlighted past Delta Science Program activities including the Interagency Ecological Program workshop, the first Cyanobacteria Harmful Algal Bloom Workshop, the 2025 Environmental Data Summit. Dr. Windham-Myers provided an update on the Social Science extension specialist position and provided a preview of future Delta Science Program activities including the release of the 2025 edition of State of Bay-Delta Science, the upcoming Delta Research Awards Seminar Series, and the Microplastic Symposium.

Dr. Windham-Myers closed with a review of By the Numbers report.

Councilmember Miller, Chair Lee, and Dr. Windham-Myers discussed the salinity measurements and salinity impact in the Delta. Councilmember Burgis and Dr. Windham-Myers discussed water storage.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was no public comment in Sacramento or Eureka.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda <https://bit.ly/3RmH5ja>, minute 00:35:38.

10. 2025 DELTA RESEARCH AWARDS AND DELTA SCIENCE FELLOWS
(INFORMATION ITEM)

Chair Lee introduced Henry DeBey, Deputy Executive Officer of Science, Dylan Stern, Program Manager, and Lisamarie Windham-Myers, Delta Lead Scientist, who presented the final selections for the 2025 Delta Research Awards and the Delta Science Fellows.

Councilmember Burgis, Debey, Councilmember Zingale, and Executive Officer Jessica Pearson discussed issues concerning monitoring/permitting with potential federal funding decrease, general concern of science interest waning, enthusiasm for future science, trust gained through accountability in science pursuit, financial proficiency/efficiency in science projects, perceived science funding decline, past funding for science (Prop 1 and Bureau of Reclamation), and the consistency and growth of the Delta Stewardship Council's contributions/support for science endeavors.

Chair Lee asked DeBey if there was a total funding number for the entire Science Action Agenda. Chair Lee and Debey discussed the estimated cost of funding the Science Action Agenda (using 2022-2026 Science Action Agendas, Laurel Larson, using two different methodologies, estimated 80-90 million dollars), efforts to increase funding, identifying funding gaps, and allocation of unallocated funding to science activities.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was one public comment in the Sacramento location.

Darcy Austin, Science Manager for the State Water Contractors (an association with 27 public water agencies relying on the State Water Project), provided comments on her program and their science funding, their appreciation of the Delta Science Program and the Delta Stewardship Council, the benefits of having more robust programs to help support all Delta science priorities, and their support for additional funding for science in this community.

There was no public comment in Eureka.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3RmH5ja>, minute 00:52:57.

11. DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES WEST FALSE RIVER PROJECT **(INFORMATION ITEM)**

Deputy Executive Officer Jeff Henderson introduced Ibraheem Alsufi, senior engineer with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Chair Lee reminded councilmembers to keep their comments and questions neutral as this project is a potential covered action.

Alsufi provided the Council with an update on the planning and implementation of the proposed West False River Salinity Barrier Project, which consists of the installation of a temporary drought salinity barrier up to two times over 10 years, with each installation remaining in place for up to 20 months over two consecutive calendar years. The barrier would be constructed no sooner than April 1 of a drought year and would be removed by November 30 of either the same or the subsequent year when it is determined to no longer be needed. The West False River Salinity Barrier Project is a potential covered action, and DWR plans to file a certification of consistency for the project in the coming weeks.

Councilmember Zingale discussed what the impacts would be on non-native invasive species. Ibraheem noted that he could follow up with some modeling information that they are currently working on.

Councilmembers and Alsufi discussed the rock barrier's permeability and the possibilities of a more permanent solution. Jacob McQuirk, principal engineer for DWR, was invited to come up to the panel and joined Alsufi to continue the conversation. McQuirk elaborated that a possible permanent fix for the salinity intrusion would be restoring Franks Tract into a wetland marsh, which would provide the same level of protection but would require robust funding and several years to accomplish. They also discussed the fiscal impacts. The proposed project would be allowed to stay in the river for 12 – 20 months twice in a ten-year period. A permanent barrier is not currently an option that is being explored.

Councilmember Burgis inquired about the barrier that was installed previously and what the takeaways have been. McQuirk commented that they have improved their collaboration efforts with the nearby community and achieved cheaper material sourcing and closer storage, which also assists in decreasing the materials cost.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was no public comment in Sacramento or Eureka.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3RmH5ja>, minute 01:32:10.

12. DELTA WATERMASTER UPDATE (INFORMATION ITEM)

Delta Watermaster, Jay Ziegler, provided an overview of water year 2023-2024, an update on the regulations by the State Water Resources Control Board in relation to SB 88, a review of his comments on the Council's Delta Adapts initiative, a highlight of multi-benefit projects in the South and North Delta, an overview of Harmful Algal bloom monitoring, and an update on the California Forever project. Councilmember Burgis and Ziegler discussed the location of the California Forever project.

Chair Lee thanked Ziegler for his comments on Delta Adapts.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was no public comment in Sacramento or Eureka.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3RmH5ja>, minute 02:13:10.

13. PREPARATION FOR NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

The next Council meeting will take place on April 24, 2025. Please refer to the posted meeting notice 10 days before the meeting for further information or updates.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

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